

Message Text

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ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

DRAFTED BY INR/RSE:IKULSKI/DGRAVES/WLIMBERG:AMD
APPROVED BY INR/DDR:DMARK
INR/RSE:JBNORBURY
S/MS:CKAMMAN
S/S:TMARTIN

-----009649 282246Z /70

O 282222Z SEP 78 ZFF4
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 247640 TOSEC 110034

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYPRUS R.)

SUBJECT: SOVIET HIGHLIGHTS, SEPTEMBER 22-28, 1978

FROM INR BOWDLER

1. OVERVIEW. BREZHNEV'S AND GROMYKO'S SPEECHES, TAKEN TOGETHER, REFLECT THE LEADERSHIP'S LATEST ASSESSMENT OF MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY. BOTH PROJECTED AN OVERALL TONE OF OPTIMISM ON DETENTE; RANCOR ON US-SOVIET RELATIONS WAS TONED DOWN SOMEWHAT; AND POLEMICS AGAINST CHINA WERE MISSING ALTOGETHER. BOTH, HOWEVER, STRONGLY REASSERTED MOSCOW'S RIGHT TO A VOICE IN THE MIDDLE EAST DIALOGUE, AND GROMYKO JUSTIFIED CONTINUED SOVIET INTERVENTION IN AFRICA AS IN ACCORD WITH UN PRINCIPLES. GROMYKO'S INDISPOSITION WHILE GIVING HIS SPEECH CALLS ATTENTION TO

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THE GENERAL PROBLEMS OF HEALTH, AGE AND SUCCESSION AMONG THE LEADERSHIP.

2. FOREIGN POLICY REVIEW. THE SPEECHES OFFERED NO FRESH SOVIET THEMES ON THE MIDDLE EAST. BREZHNEV AT BAKU SHARPLY ATTACKED THE CAMP DAVID ACCORDS AS INTENDED TO SPLIT THE ARABS AND IMPOSE ON THEM "TERMS THAT SUIT THE

AGGRESSOR"; GROMYKO REPEAT-D ;:IS LINE AND CALLED FOR RECONVENING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE.

-- BREZHNEV'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PROGRESS IN SALT AND HIS CALL FOR "GOOD-WILL AND STATE WISDOM" IMPLY A SOVIET ASSESSMENT THAT AN AGREEMENT MAY BE CLOSE AND THAT THE US SHOULD BE PUSHED TO BRING IT ABOUT.

-- BREZHNEV'S COMPLAINT THAT THE US HAS BEEN APPLYING THE BRAKES ON TRADE AND SCIENCE/TECHNOLOGY TIES UNDER THE PRETEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HIS INSISTENCE THAT THE USSR WOULD NOT "GIVE IN TO PROVOCATIONS" WAS ABOUT THE LEAST HE COULD SAY TO A DOMESTIC AUDIENCE TO SHOW THAT MOSCOW WILL CONTINUE TO RESIST PRESSURES IN THIS REALM.

-- GROMYKO'S PREDICTION THAT THE "HOUR OF INDEPENDENCE" FOR THE PEOPLES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA IS NOT FAR OFF AND HIS PLEDGE OF CONTINUED SOVIET AID TO LIBERATION CAUSES WAS INTENDED AS AN UNEQUIVOCAL STATEMENT OF THE SOVIET RIGHT TO INTERVENE THERE; AND HIS POINTED EXPRESSION OF "ANXIETY" ABOUT JAPAN AND WARNING THAT IT MAY BE ON THE ROAD TO "CATASTROPHE" INDICATES THAT THE POTENTIAL SINO-JAPANESE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP IS COMMANDING MOSCOW'S PRIORITY ATTENTION.

-- ON DISARMAMENT GROMYKO FEATURED THE NEW SOVIET PROPOSAL
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FOR NEGATIVE SECURITY GUARANTEES AND OTHERWISE REITERATED PREVAILING POSITIONS.

3. ETHIOPIA. DURING KUZNETSOV'S RECENT VISIT, THE SOVIETS REPORTEDLY TOLD THE ETHIOPIANS THAT THEY WOULD DEFER FOR FIVE YEARS ETHIOPIA'S REPAYMENT ON MILITARY PURCHASES, WHICH NOW TOTAL OVER \$1 BILLION. MENGISTU REPORTEDLY HAS BEEN DISSATISFIED WITH THE AID AND HAS INDICATED THAT HE HAS NO INTENTION OF REPAYING THE DEBT. THE ETHIOPIANS WERE ALSO REPORTEDLY UNHAPPY THAT KUZNETSOV BROUGHT NO PROMISE OF NEW ECONOMIC AID.

4. GROMYKO'S ILLNESS. THE UN EPISODE CALLS ATTENTION TO A GENERAL PROBLEM AMONG THE TOP LEADERSHIP. UNWILLING TO RETIRE OR TO NAME REPLACEMENTS, THE SENIORS ARE NOW GIVING WAY TO THE EFFECTS OF AGING. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS ALSO GRAPPLED UNSUCCESSFULLY WITH THE PROBLEM OF CHOOSING SUCCESSORS. ACCORDING TO A SENSITIVE SOURCE, PRELIMINARY PLANS TO BRING DOBRYNIN BACK TO MOSCOW TWO YEARS AGO AS A FIRST DEPUTY WERE STYMIED AT LEAST IN PART BY THE PERCEPTION THAT HE WAS IRREPLACEABLE IN WASHINGTON. THE PRESENT FIRST DEPUTIES--KORNIYENKO AND MAL'TSEV--ARE

UNLIKELY TO WIN POLITBURO STATUS SHOULD EITHER EVENTUALLY BE PROMOTED TO THE MINISTERSHIP. THIS WOULD BE A SETBACK FOR THE MINISTRY'S STATUS IN POLICY FORMULATION AND WOULD ALSO REMOVE VALUABLE FOREIGN POLICY EXPERTISE FROM POLITBURO DISCUSSIONS.

5. LABOR SHORTAGE. IN HIS BAKU SPEECH BREZHNEV DWELT ON THE GROWING SOVIET LABOR SHORTAGE. HE NOTED THAT UNTAPPED LABOR RESERVES EXIST IN THE TRANSCAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA AND SPECIFIED THE TYUMEN OIL FIELDS AND OTHER REGIONS AS NEEDING WORKERS. THIS IS THE HIGHEST-LEVEL INDICATION TO DATE THAT THE SOVIETS ARE BEGINNING TO FOCUS ON HOW TO TAP THEIR RELATIVELY MORE ABUNDANT NON-SLAVIC LABOR RESOURCES FOR WORK IN THE RSFSR. CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DETENTE, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, SPEECHES, PEACE PLANS, SALT (ARMS CONTROL), CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 sep 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE247640
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: IKULSKI/DGRAVES/WLIMBERG:AMD
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840156-2124
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978099/aaaaahgd.tel
Line Count: 128
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8bafde55-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1507947
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET HIGHLIGHTS, SEPTEMBER 22-28, 1978
TAGS: OVIP, PBOR, PARM, MOPS, PINS, US, ET, XF, SF, UN, (GROMYKO, ANDREY ANDREYEVICH), (VANCE, CYRUS R), (BREZHNEV, LEONID I)
To: SECRETARY
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8bafde55-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014